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Wednesday, 12 April 2017, 4.35 p.m.
New York

President:	Ms Sison	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Fesko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2017/208)

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The meeting was called to order at 4.35 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2017/208)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/208, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

I now give the floor to Mr. Djinnit.

Mr. Djinnit: I would like to thank the Security Council for the opportunity to brief it on the progress on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, and on the challenges to it.

I would like to begin by highlighting some of the progress that has been made in implementing the Framework during the period under review. On 26 October, as a result of the successful reform of the governing structures of the Framework initiated by my Office with the support of the other guarantors, Angola hosted the seventh Summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism in Luanda, the first meeting of the Mechanism to take place in a signatory country since the Framework agreement was signed four years ago. The Summit generated renewed ownership and commitment by the leaders of the region to the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. I am pleased to report that other countries, including the Republic of the Congo and Uganda have offered to host future summits of the Regional Oversight Mechanism.

The persistent activities of the illegal armed groups remain one of the main threats to the security of the populations and to the stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. We should therefore continue to beef up efforts aimed at neutralizing the illegal armed groups, including the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and others, building on the progress made so far by the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the support of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). In that regard, it is important to further strengthen the cooperation between the two forces. It is equally important, as stressed in resolution 2348 (2017), that the Force Intervention Brigade, with the support of MONUSCO as a whole, enhance its offensive operations targeting the armed groups.

I welcome the launching on 18 February by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda of the Joint Follow-up Mechanism to address the growing threat posed by the ADF. I call on the participating countries to contribute actively to that Mechanism and provide it with the necessary resources to allow it to effectively perform its mission. Against that background, the recent incursion into the Democratic Republic of the Congo by the elements of the former Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) rebel group, previously cantoned in Uganda, was a setback to the commendable efforts deployed by the leaders of the region to address that recurrent problem in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through the signing of the famous Nairobi Declarations in 2013.

Following that incident, I engaged together with Special Representative of the Secretary-General Sidikou and authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda to encourage an early resumption of the joint consultations, which we facilitated last year — as the United Nations, together with the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework — between Government officials and ex-M-23 representatives on the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations. We shall pursue those efforts.

We have also been assisting the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan to

address the issue of the presence of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition elements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Similarly, we will continue to work closely with the other guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the countries of the region and partners to tackle the daunting challenge of the repatriation of disarmed foreign combatants in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries.

Although relations between countries of the region have been affected by the activities of illegal armed groups, which have generated suspicion and mistrust, the reporting period witnessed promising steps towards the strengthening of economic cooperation. I encourage the signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to continue to engage in joint development projects that contribute to further enhancing regional integration and stability.

During the reporting period, my office, together with country teams and the other United Nations entities in the region, has continued to support efforts to address the root causes of conflict in the region, in line with that mandate. In addition to ongoing efforts to support the empowerment of women in the region, we are currently promoting initiatives on displacement, illicit exploitation of natural resources, youth unemployment and fighting impunity, jointly with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other partners.

(*spoke in French*)

I have continued to support the inter-Burundian dialogue by being in direct contact with the Facilitator, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, and by encouraging increased commitment from leaders in the region. In that regard, the next summit of the Community of East African States will certainly provide an opportunity for Heads of State in the region to reiterate their support for the Facilitator's efforts and to show greater commitment to Burundian stakeholders in the quest for a consensus-based solution to the issues the country faces. In close collaboration with my colleague, Mr. Maman Sidikou, I will also continue to encourage inter-Congolese dialogue, which was facilitated by the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo (CENCO) and led to the signing of the comprehensive and inclusive political agreement on 31 December 2016 and to the subsequent negotiations on the specific arrangements.

I take this opportunity to commend CENCO's laudable work. When it concluded its mediation on 27 March, CENCO called for the personal involvement of and accountability from the Head of State, as the nation's guarantor of the swift implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement. Since then, President Joseph Kabila has appointed a Prime Minister. That appointment was met with opposition from the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo acquises au changement, headed by the late Étienne Tshisekedi and Pierre Lumbi.

I call on the parties to strictly implement the 31 December 2016 agreement, in order to create the conditions for the holding of transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections, through dialogue and an ongoing quest for consensus. I implore them to refrain from engaging in any action that could spark violence. I reiterate the United Nations readiness to support and assist the Congolese parties in implementing the 31 December 2016 agreement, in accordance with resolution 2348 (2017). In that regard, it is important for the United Nations, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, as guarantor of the framework agreement to continue to work closely and coordinate their actions to facilitate the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement.

I would like to recall that, apart from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Kenya and Rwanda will also hold elections in the coming months. I encourage all stakeholders in those countries to create conditions that are conducive to the holding of transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections.

(*spoke in English*)

In conclusion, I wish to commend the leaders and the people of the Great Lakes region for their monumental achievements in overcoming the tragedies and conflicts of the past and for charting the way forward towards shared peace and prosperity. I encourage them to pursue their efforts through decisive steps to address the outstanding issue of the illegal armed groups. I also encourage the leaders of the region to remain committed to assisting Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan to address the persistent crisis in those countries. In their efforts, the countries of the region can count on the continued support of the United

Nations, working closely with the African Union and subregional organizations.

The President: I thank Mr. Djinnit for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): First, I would like to warmly thank Mr. Djinnit for his excellent work and unwavering commitment to achieving peace in the Great Lakes region. I am pleased that we have been given the opportunity to speak with him in this format, where we can take a step back and consider all of the region's challenges. The regional dimension of the crisis in the Great Lakes region should not be neglected.

France is concerned about three main mutually reinforcing issues in the region: the continued slow process of implementing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, the ongoing political crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the situation in Burundi, both of which can significantly destabilize the region if they are not resolved. The Security Council must take joint, decisive action thereon in order to prevent a regional crisis from erupting.

Turning first to the Addis Ababa Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, I would note that despite some headway, as underscored by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2017/208), which was presented by Mr. Djinnit, negative forces continue to make their presence felt in the region. Although the era of reciprocal destabilization by armed groups is, fortunately, over, the legacy of that time remains, and certain armed groups are still active. This legacy of the past continues to fuel suspicion and mistrust between the countries of the region; it must be definitely resolved so that the region can finally move forward and forge healthy ties of cooperation. To that end, decisive steps will need to be taken in three areas, and regional organizations, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), have a key role to play in this respect.

First, with respect to a military response to the armed groups, a key role will be played by the Force Intervention Brigade, provided by SADC. The renewed mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) will enable it to rebuild its capacity for mobility in order for it to engage in decisive offensive actions, as it did with respect to the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23).

Secondly, political action must be taken in order to demobilize, repatriate and reintegrate these combatants in their countries of origin. Here I am thinking of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and former members of M23, as well as those of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition, who have been in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since last year. This will require joint action and a commitment at the highest level of the political leaders concerned.

The Addis Ababa agreement, which experienced a welcome revitalization thanks to the efforts of Angola in 2016, must be fully implemented, and the Technical Support Committee of the Regional Oversight Mechanism must undertake this task. Its upcoming meeting in Brazzaville in October will be an opportunity to address the issue.

Thirdly, I turn to the issue of tackling the illicit trafficking in natural resources. Armed groups use such traffic to meet their needs, contribute to their survival and fuel an economy of war and predation. So long as that illicit trafficking continues, no lasting solution to the instability in the region is possible. Therefore there needs to be strong, harmonized action by the countries of the region as well as a sustained commitment of international partners to ensure that we can stamp out illicit trafficking in natural resources with the support of the international community. We must work for transparency in the mining industry and ensure greater traceability of minerals.

Turning to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, France is very concerned. At the political level, the failure to implement the 31 December 2016 agreement threatens any potential resolution of the crisis. All of the legislative bodies in the country have now overrun their mandates, and therefore their legitimacy going forward depends entirely on the 31 December 2016 agreement and the consensus that characterized its signing. The appointment of a Prime Minister who does not enjoy consensus support following a process that does not respect the provisions of the 31 December 2016 agreement is a very worrying step. The agreement is the only credible road map for an end to the crisis, and its violation could seriously threaten the stability and the future of the country.

In keeping with resolution 2348 (2017), which was just adopted by the Security Council unanimously, France reaffirms the need for the urgent and unconditional implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement, including the lifting of restrictions on rights and freedoms, so as to enable the holding, in suitable conditions, of elections by the end of 2017, as agreed, thus paving the way for the first peaceful transition of power in the history of the country.

It is crucial that international partners, the Security Council, the African Union and the SADC, all of which welcomed the 31 December 2016 agreement, work to ensure its implementation. France will stand side by side with its partners to achieve that purpose.

The deterioration of the security and human rights situation is also a source of great concern to us. Violence in the Kasai region has soared to levels that we had hoped never again to see in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is therefore pressing that the situation be brought under control. France condemns the acts of violence that we have seen in the region over the last few months and looks forward to the outcome of the joint inquiry of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO into violations and assaults on human rights and humanitarian law in the region.

The cowardly murder of two United Nations experts in that region underscores once again the deterioration of the situation in the area. France calls for full light to be shed on this very tragic event, so that those responsible can be identified and stand trial for their crimes. We once again underscore our full support for the United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo, whose members play a key role.

Turning finally to the situation in Burundi, here we have to note that, regrettably, there has been no noticeable improvement. As the Secretary-General states in his report,

> "The inter-Burundian dialogue, facilitated by the East African Community, has yet to produce a breakthrough". (*S/2017/208, para. 14*)

Despite the efforts of the Facilitator, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, which France welcomes, a genuine and authentic commitment to this dialogue is still lacking. Observers from the African Union have not yet been deployed, nor have the police officers specified in resolution 2303 (2016); on the contrary, the situation seems to be getting worse by the day. I think that no one could fail to be shocked by the images of the video that has been circulating in which young members of the Imbonerakure militia call for rape and murder. These images and the hate speech that goes with it conjure up extremely painful memories in the Great Lakes region and is a source of grave concern for France. Such behaviour cannot be tolerated. The leadership of the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie has condemned these acts, and France hopes that appropriate measures will be taken to put a definitive end to such behaviour and that the perpetrators of human rights violations in the country will be prosecuted and sentenced.

Burundi could, with the restoration of peace and security, play a stabilizing role on the continent, as it was able to do in the past by sending peacekeepers to the Central African Republic and Somalia. For that to happen, the resolutions of the Security Council must be implemented and peaceful relationships restored with the United Nations agencies that have been supporting Burundi for 20 years towards a return to peace. The resumption of cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights would be a positive step along these lines.

This will require finding a political solution to the current crisis through inclusive, open and honest dialogue by way of the mediation efforts of the East African Community (EAC) and full respect for the Arusha agreement. Only such a dialogue, strengthened by a firm rejection of violence and by guaranteeing the security and fundamental rights of all Burundians, will can allow Burundi to find its way back to the path of peace and stability.

France hopes that the EAC Summit at the end of April will be the first step in a positive process and that the Government will honestly commit to moving forward.

Our most deeply cherished wish as a close-knit partner of the region and a permanent member of the Security Council is to see Burundi pursue the cause of peace and lasting stability so as to finally benefit from its wealth in natural resources and be able to focus on development and the well-being of people. This will require a strengthening of political stability and the democratic legitimacy of institutions, as well as a fight against impunity. This is not a given, and France is concerned. We hope that political leaders will meet the challenges and put the process back on track. It is

the responsibility of the Security Council to support them in this difficult task so as to ensure that years of tremendous investment on the part of the international community are not jeopardized and that the peoples of the region do not suffer as a result.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Said Djinnit, for the update that he has provided in the wake of the report submitted by the Secretary-General in March 2017 (S/2017/208) on the implementation of the framework agreement for Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

During the past few weeks, the Security Council has devoted several meetings to the countries of the Great Lakes region, including the review of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/206) on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the process for the renewal of the mandate of that Mission pursuant to resolution 2348 (2017), which the Security Council adopted on 31 March. Moreover, the present meeting comes at an opportune time in that it allows us to focus on the regional dynamics, which are essential for the peace and security of the States of the region. In that regard, the Senegalese delegation reiterates its support for the tireless efforts of the Special Envoy, Mr. Said Djinnit, in particular in the areas of preventive diplomacy and the promotion of peace and security in the Great Lakes region.

In the area of security, the ongoing situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains a matter of concern, with the resurgence of the Movement of March 23 (M-23), which has been observed during the past months. The resurgence of M-23, once again, underscores the crucial question of the implementation of the Declaration of Commitments by the Movement of March 23, known as the Nairobi Declarations, and therefore poses new challenges to regional cooperation. Such regional cooperation is absolutely necessary to achieving peace, security and sustainable development in the Great Lakes region. It continues to be the only viable mechanism to overcome the decades-long threat posed by armed groups in and beyond the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. For example, such regional cooperation could well provide the appropriate framework for finding a solution to the problem generated by the presence of elements of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo following last July's clashes so as to not further complicate the already fragile security situation of the area. Accordingly, all efforts by the United Nations as well as the countries of the region must contribute to the search for an appropriate solution to that problem.

Furthermore, with regard to security, the spread of outbreaks of community violence beyond eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is a matter of great concern to us. We therefore call for a rapid response to that emerging threat, including through political responses.

One of the most tangible consequences of the regional security situation, which remains fragile, is the large number of refugees and displaced persons representing respectively more than 3.5 million and 6 million individuals in the region. The Senegalese delegation shares the satisfaction expressed by the Secretary-General with regard to the hospitality of the countries and peoples of the region who have welcomed that flow of people with the limited means and resources at their disposal. Those host countries and communities deserve increased support from the international community.

At the political level, we note that instability persists in some countries of the region despite the political processes and dialogue that were initiated and aimed at peacefully resolving crises that, for the most part, are associated with issues pertaining to electoral processes. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage the Special Envoy to pursue his coordination work with the organizations and countries of the region to support the inter-Burundi dialogue facilitated by the Economic Commission for Africa and the ongoing political process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, among others.

In that regard, my delegation would like to call upon the various parties concerned by those political processes to further explore the inexhaustible possibilities for dialogue in a spirit of enhanced mutual trust, respect for human and civil rights and ensuring public order, while, above all, showing a genuine desire for compromise.

Concerning more specifically the implementation of the Framework Agreement, we note with satisfaction the progress made in the establishment of a joint follow-up mechanism to address the threat of the Allied Democratic Forces. The mechanism, it should

be recalled, was agreed by the Heads of State of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania on the sidelines of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) in June 2016. The same dynamic should be implemented in connection with repatriating and disarming the combatants of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and M-23, which, according to the report of the Secretary-General, are making limited progress.

It is also necessary to recall that the implementation of the Framework agreement includes a component which concerns the international community, in particular the United Nations. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the Special Envoy to promote international support for the Framework agreement, as well as the operationalization of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework 2016-2017, which we endorsed here in March 2016 with the adoption of resolution 2277 (2016).

Finally, the Senegalese delegation would like to speak on behalf of the other countries of the region who believe that the fight against insecurity in the Great Lakes region should proactively take charge of the trafficking and illegal exploitation of natural resources that fuel conflicts and support armed groups. In that regard, we look forward to the holding of a meeting jointly organized by the Executive Secretary of the ICGLR and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on the illegal exploitation and trade in natural resources by armed groups, as was requested by the Defence Ministers for member States of the ICGLR and Southern African Development Community in Nairobi on 20 July 2016 (see S/2016/840).

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Said Djinnit, for his briefing on the implementation of the Framework agreement on peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region. We believe that it is the cornerstone for ensuring stability in the Great Lakes region. We are in favour of the full implementation of all the commitments by all signatories, including respect for sovereignty, non-interference in other countries' internal affairs and strengthening confidence-building measures among the countries of the subregion.

In that regard, we note the effective interaction between the Congolese leadership and neighbouring countries in the region in August 2016, as well as the beginning of the joint follow-up mechanism established through the collective efforts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania to counter the Allied Democratic Forces. The positive outcome was the meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism for Peace, Security and Cooperation Agreement, held in Luanda on October 26, that showed that the mechanism exists and acts independently without external support.

We should note that, three years following its signing, the military provisions of the Framework agreement remain far from being implemented. We commend the work of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which remains committed to combating gangs and stabilizing the situation, and welcome the resumed full-scale cooperation, in June 2016, between Kinshasa and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in that area. But the armed groups remain active in the country and in the region, in general, and their activities prolong the ethnic conflicts, provoke the illegal spread of weapons and worsen the humanitarian situation. It is clear that there is no military solution to the conflict. Comprehensive measures are needed to eliminate its underlining causes, including through the strengthening the State authorities in the liberated areas.

We are concerned about the situation with respect to the repatriation of several hundred of ex-combatants from the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) from Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Of course, the ongoing contacts between the Congolese authorities and the leadership of the M-23 is welcome news, but the lack of progress in this area has already led to repeat offences by the combatants. In this regard, we are naturally concerned by the repeated mutual accusations about supporting combatants and recruiting refugees into their ranks. We think that the sides have to display maximum restraint and avoid an escalation including through using the expanded Joint Verification Mechanism, which is provided for in the Framework agreement.

Another challenge for the Framework agreement is the issue of having the allies of Mr. Riek Machar present on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Without going to the genesis of the problem, we call upon Mr. Djinnit and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Maman Sidikou to do everything they can to make sure that the relevant provisions of resolution 2348 (2017) are implemented. We know the

role played by the Special Envoy in trying to bring private investors into the region and in providing a new dynamic to the economic cooperation among countries in the region, thereby strengthening peace and cooperation there.

A number of country signatories to the Framework agreement are still on the Security Council agenda because of the still-unresolved conflicts. The continuation of these conflicts is fed by social networks via the Internet. We call for putting an end to the rhetoric of hate on the part of members of the opposition and spoilers who have found refuge in Western countries, in particular those from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Belgium and South Sudan in the United States and the United Kingdom. Without this, the provisions we have in resolution 2327 (2016) will make no sense. Africans, should not have to pay with their lives so that the citizens of those countries can enjoy the freedom of expression.

Many countries in the region are at a stage where they are the creating or reforming their democratic institutions. Some of them are in the pre-election period. We welcome the effective mediation efforts and good offices of the United Nations, the African Union and the East African Community, which helped launch a national mechanism for political dialogue in Burundi and helped to bring the negotiating process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to a successful conclusion. At the same time, there is no doubt that political conclusions will lead to lasting stability only if they are arrived at by the members of the political processes themselves. Trying to provide them with recipes or to interpret agreements achieved is unacceptable.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would like to thank Special Envoy Djinnit for his informative briefing. Against the complex backdrop of the Great Lakes region, his good offices have been invaluable in promoting regional ownership and commitment to revitalizing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework agreement. The Framework agreement remains essential to achieving sustainable peace and stability in the region. Japan reaffirms its support for Mr. Djinnit's efforts in this regard. Let me underline two major challenges the region faces today.

First, with respect to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we recently renewed the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in order to make it more efficient and focused on key tasks. We are encouraged by the strong commitment of the Southern African Development Community, as reaffirmed in this Chamber by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania, to continuing to work together with MONUSCO to assist the Democratic Republic of the Congo in achieving sustained peace.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is at a critical juncture. The Security Council has been closely following the status of the implementation of the 31 December Political Agreement. Three months have already passed without the establishment of transitional institutions. Japan renews its call on President Kabila Kabange for further leadership and urges all political actors to accelerate the political process. Successful elections are the only viable way to sustain the gains made by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region thus far.

The second challenge is the situation in Burundi. Japan welcomes the recent meeting between President Nkurunziza and the Chair of the Burundi country configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. It is important that this window of dialogue be kept open. However, we remain deeply concerned about the continued suspension of cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of serious human rights violations, especially the climate of impunity surrounding Imbonerakure. We strongly encourage the Government of Burundi to constructively engage with international partners, especially the United Nations, to re-establish cooperative relations based on mutual trust. Japan reiterates that maintaining some level of United Nations presence in Burundi will benefit Burundi itself. In this regard, Japan emphasizes the importance of engagement by the African Union (AU), including through the deployment of AU observers.

I would also like to assure the Council of Japan's full support for the mediation led by the East African Community (EAC) and Mr. Mkapa's facilitation role. We look forward to the forthcoming EAC Summit on 20 April in Dar Es Salaam. We are confident that the heads of State in the subregion will seriously consider the situation in Burundi and provide strong guidance to Mr. Mkapa so that he can lead an inclusive dialogue process.

In closing, I would like to announce that the Japan recently decided to provide $18 million in assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia, with particular focus on refugees and food security. Japan will continue to support the people of the Great Lakes region as they seek more peaceful, stable and prosperous lives.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We are very pleased to see our good friend and brother, Ambassador Said Djinnit, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, among us today. He is our encyclopedia for African politics including those of the Horn. We thank him for his comprehensive briefing on the latest developments in the region and his steadfast efforts aimed at promoting peace, security and stability, in line with the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

We have been discussing the situation in the Great Lakes region in one form or another over the last couple of months when we were dealing with country-specific issues, but today's briefing gives us a comprehensive and holistic picture of the political and security situation in the Great Lakes region. We believe that this is important because the political instability and conflict in some of the countries has a regional dimension, and a concerted regional and international effort is needed to promote peace and stability in the wider region.

In this regard, we take note of the progress made in addressing the challenges that remain, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/208). We remain seriously concerned about the deteriorating security situation in the Great Lakes. No doubt the Democratic Republic of the Congo is at the epicentre of the security dynamics in the region, and whatever is happening in the country will have implications for the wider region. That is why we are worried about the activities of armed groups in the eastern part of Democratic Republic of the Congo and the resurgence of negative forces which could undermine regional peace and stability. We appreciate the cooperation between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the country's national army, and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in response to the activities of these illegal armed groups and negative forces.

We appreciate the efforts being exerted by the Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region to address the issue through consultations with the countries of the region and the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSC) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region . In that connection, we welcome the reform of the structures of governance within the framework of PSC and the renewed commitment of the signatories and guarantors to accelerate its full implementation. Regarding reports of an incursion of ex-M-23 combatants into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we support the call made by the guarantors for all concerned parties to remain committed to the full implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and to refrain from any actions that might jeopardize their implementation.

As far as the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is concerned, we cannot overemphasize the need for the full implementation of the Nairobi Declarations. In the spirit of the political agreement reached on 31 December 2016, the Democratic Republic of the Congo must pave the way for ensuring a successful transition and continued peace and stability in the country. All parties should be called upon to resolve any outstanding issues in the spirit of compromise. They should also be urged to cooperate with mediators of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo (CENCO), whose role continues to be important in ensuring the implementation of the agreement. It will be very damaging if there is an inclination to set aside the agreement of 31 December and marginalize CENCO.

We also believe that the support of the countries of the region, as well as the African Union and the United Nations, acting in unison and putting their full weight behind the effort, are critical in order to ensure a smooth transition process and ensure that the holding of elections takes place as envisaged in the 31 December agreement. We commend the Special Envoy for continuing to play an important role through his good offices and in close coordination with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic republic of the Congo, Mr. Sidikou, while engaging the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the African Union, as well as regional leaders, in support of the effort.

Regarding Burundi, we understand that the security situation has improved relative to past years. However, we note that allegations of violations of human rights, including forced disappearances and targeted killings, have not ceased. We believe that intra-Burundian dialogue, under the auspices of the East African Community (EAC) mediation effort, remains an

important platform for the search for a solution to the political crisis in Burundi. We recognize that there appears to be a veritable stalemate in the peace process. We support the call made by the facilitator for the convening of an extraordinary summit on Burundi in order to stop the political gridlock. We also appreciate the Special Envoy's engagement on the issue, as well as his continued interactions with the facilitator and other regional leaders, aimed at reactivating the intra-Burundian dialogue and encouraging parties to show flexibility and readiness for compromise. We think that there is a need for the EAC, the African Union and the United Nations to coordinate effectively in order to ensure that facilitation is supported in the best way possible.

Finally, the peace and security of the Great Lakes Region is critical. The resolution of the situation has broad implications in that regard. Therefore, the sustained engagement of the Council in supporting ongoing mediation efforts and ensuring the long-term stability of the region will be significant in line with the commitments made within the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank the United States for convening this meeting, and the Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Djinnit, for his briefing. China will continue to actively support his work.

The Great Lakes Region lies at the heart of the African continent and the countries of the region share the same destiny, with interconnected interests. China appreciates the efforts of the countries of the region to actively implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and promote peace and stability in the region. At the same time, the countries of the region face numerous challenges in terms of addressing the threats posed by armed groups and attaining sustainable development. They need the assistance and support of the international community. I will emphasize the following four points.

First, we must continue to energetically implement the PSC Framework. China encourages the countries of the region to respect one another's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. They must build up political trust, strengthen good neighbourly relations and solve their differences through dialogue and consultations. We hope that the international community will, on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and opinion of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, help the country to implement political agreements, deepen the reform of the security sector, strengthen governance in the eastern areas of the country, promote national reconciliation and work to attain peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

Secondly, we must strengthen the security cooperation among countries of the region. China welcomes the cooperation among those countries in addressing the threats posed by armed groups. We encourage those countries to actively implement the Nairobi Declarations and expedite the repatriation of ex-M-23 combatants. We hope that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will, in accordance with its mandate from the Security Council , play an active role in helping the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo to fight armed groups.

Thirdly, we must promote the economic development of the region. Poverty and underdevelopment are two of the fundamental causes behind the incessant conflicts of the Great Lakes Region. China calls upon the international community to increase its investment in countries of the region in the fields of agriculture, energy, infrastructure, communications and tourism, and promote the economic integration and interconnectedness among those countries, so that those countries can share the dividends of peace. We hope that the relevant donors will honour their assistance commitments and lend strong support to the countries of the region for their economic development and the improvement of peoples' livelihoods.

Fourthly, we must give full play to the role of regional and subregional organizations. The African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the East African Community enjoy unique advantages in solving the question of Burundi, the question of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other questions. All of those organizations have played important roles. China supports Africa in solving African problems in African ways. We support African regional and subregional organizations as they continue to promote the political settlement of regional hotspot issues through dialogue, mediation and good offices. We hope that the United Nations will

strengthen its coordination with other African regional and subregional organizations so as to create synergies.

China has consistently supported the countries of the Great Lakes Region in their efforts to promote the peace process. On many occasions, China has dispatched its Special Representative for African Affairs to countries of the region for mediation. China participates actively in the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while helping regional and subregional organizations to maintain peace in the region. We stand ready to work with the international community and will continue to play a constructive role in achieving peace and stability and promoting development in the Great Lakes Region.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Djinnit, for his briefing to the Council. Italy welcomes his efforts, which have opened the door to positive results in terms of a reform process and the revitalization of the follow-up mechanism to the Partnership Africa Canada framework.

The active engagement of the Governments has proved the effectiveness of that mechanism. Of course, there is still a need to act, since we still have reason for concern. The Special Envoy has given us a clear depiction of the challenges that lie before us today. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is critical. The bishops of the Congolese Catholic Church have decided to put an end to their mediation efforts. We supported their mediation efforts from the beginning, and we thank them for all that they have done.

President Kabila has appointed a new Prime Minister, who does not enjoy consensus support. That has led to a swift reaction by the opposition, which considers that appointment to be a non-event. Moreover, the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo acquises au changement has called for mass demonstrations to protest that appointment. That shows us that the 31 December agreement provides the only possible road map for a political transition that is peaceful, credible and inclusive. The United Nations has already demonstrated its willingness to stand with the people of that country. It has already been recalled that the Council unanimously voted in favour of resolution 2348 (2017), which renewed the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), enabling the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement and the electoral process.

This year could mark a turning point in the history of the country. We would like to launch an appeal to the political leaders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Political leaders, both those in the Government and those in the opposition, have to demonstrate their sense of responsibility by renewing dialogue, and must allow themselves to be guided by the interests of the country and the aspirations of the people.

The security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is also of concern. Italy is watching with grave concern the increase in the theatres of instability in the country, and calls for an end to the violence targeting civilians. The serious situation in Kasai province in particular was condemned by the United Nations, the African Union, and the International Organization of la Francophonie. We are deeply concerned by the recent discovery of mass graves in that region. We encourage the relevant authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to undertake all the necessary measures to ensure that in-depth investigations are carried out in order to shed light on that episode.

We also recall that, as the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court stated, the aforementioned violence could constitute crimes that fall within the purview of the Court. In that regard, it is our wish that those responsible for the despicable murder of the two United Nations experts be brought to justice. Allow me to once again express our grief at the loss of Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalan, who contributed enormously to the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Continuing our examination of the security aspect, we must, of course, consider the regional dimension. The reappearance of the Mouvement du 23 mars and the persistence in the east of such negative forces as the Alliance of Democratic Forces and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda require strengthened regional cooperation so as to ensure that the progress achieved in the fight against those groups is not lost.

With regard to the presence of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — a situation

that must be resolved quickly — we encourage all stakeholders to pursue dialogue in coordination with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General. The fragility of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is reflected in other countries in the region. Chronic instability enables the illegal exploitation of and illicit trafficking in natural resources, feeding a vicious circle that also fuels armed groups.

In addition, instability continues to grow in terms of the number of refugees in the region. Beyond the traditional eastern border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda has become the main host of refugees. There are now new inflows of refugees. In order to offer its assistance to the population in need in the Great Lakes region, the European Union yesterday announced funding amounting to €32 million. However, international assistance is not enough. In our view, we must encourage the countries of the region to adopt coordinated strategies aimed at promoting long-term solutions, while recalling the importance of obligations under the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the protocols thereto.

Although the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the cornerstone of stability in the region, there are other situations that require the attention of the Council. Here I would briefly turn to the subject of Burundi and reiterate our call to the countries of the region, which play an indispensable role in the inter-Burundian dialogue. The mediation process led by the East African Community (EAC) is significant in that regard, but requires the support of regional Powers in order to make progress. We have just received discouraging news. The summit of the Heads of State of the EAC, which was scheduled to take place on 28 April, has been postponed once again for unforeseen reasons. We hope that that was not due to the serious crisis in Burundi and that a specific date for that meeting will be set this week.

In conclusion, the complexity of the problem in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region requires a multidimensional response, which is provided by the African Union Peace and Security Council's framework agreement for peace. It is a vital mechanism for stability in that corner of the African continent. While ensuring our support for the Special Envoy in his efforts to uphold that framework agreement, we encourage the countries of the region to continue to work to ensure its effectiveness. In particular, as stated by the representative of the African Union, we invite them to reactivate those various mechanisms in order to deal with the recent security developments.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express my appreciation for the valuable briefing given by Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and for his relentless efforts to develop cooperation among the States of the region.

The Great Lakes region is in the heart of the African continent. Therefore, building peace in the region will have an impact on the development and stability of the entire continent. Despite their considerable capacities, the States of the region continue to face tremendous security, stability, democracy and development challenges. Most prominent among those challenges are armed groups, which are the main obstacle to State authority and which pose a great threat to the lives of civilians. They also play a role in stealing natural wealth, thereby depriving the people of the region of a significant development resource. Moreover, the humanitarian situation is a source of serious concern, with the presence of a great number of refugees and displaced persons.

Egypt believes that efforts to face those challenges require, first and foremost, cooperation among the States of the region, in line with their collective responsibility to work to achieve stability. Nationally owned sustainable solutions must also be sought through the promotion of regional and international partnerships, in particular with the African Union and the United Nations.

Therefore, and in line with our position as a co-opted member of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, we hosted a high-level workshop on 27 February in Cairo. Many ministers and officials of the States of the region participated, along with representatives of the United Nations, the African Union and other regional organizations. In the discussions on a global response to threats to peace and security in the Great Lakes region, emphasis was placed on three key areas.

The first was to address current challenges and proactively exploit opportunities to transform the region into one of stability and prosperity. The most fundamental of those opportunities is provided by the ongoing political processes, such as those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and the Central African Republic. Those processes enjoy great

attention from the international community. Moreover, there is a considerable institutional structure and a valid political framework for cooperation among the States of the region, which should be put to use.

The second area of focus was the role of peacekeeping operations and sustaining peace, especially given that the region hosts a great number of such operations. The workshop stressed the importance of developing and ensuring the consistency of peacekeeping-operation mandates, so that they align with the actual needs of the countries concerned at the various phases and can help to preserve and build peace in line with the relevant principles, thereby laying a strong foundation for sustainable peace. Diverse and integrated regional efforts, as well as security, political, development and humanitarian tools, are also of importance.

Lastly, the workshop stressed the importance of promoting the role of society in conflict settlement and peaceful coexistence, including in the fight against terrorism and extremism, and in efforts to prevent new fighters from joining armed groups, in mediation, and in promoting the role of women and young people in peacebuilding frameworks. We stress the importance of the Peace and Security Council Framework agreement in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. It is the basic framework for stability. We also agree that the States of the region should commit to the Framework agreement and continue their efforts.

On the other hand, several developments require the attention of the international community, including the hurdles facing the African initiative to eradicate the Lord's Resistance Army after several regional actors and partners announced that they wanted to withdraw from that initiative. The situation calls for an ongoing dialogue among the members of the initiative so as to overcome those hurdles and prevent the loss of the progress achieved in efforts to halt that movement. Moreover, the growing security challenges in the Democratic Republic of the Congo attest to the great responsibility of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in that regard we need to provide the Mission with the necessary capacities and resources.

At the political level, we are fully confident in the ability of the Congolese people to get through this critical crossroads. We take note of the latest developments, especially the appointment by the new President of a Prime Minister and the reactions to that decision by various political forces. We stress that all parties should shoulder their responsibilities, give priority to the national interests and settle their differences. That will enable the full implementation of the political agreement of 31 December and national concord. We also stress the important role of international and regional partners in helping the Congolese parties to overcome their differences, and of the good will of the African Union and the region.

With regard to the situation in Burundi, despite the progress in the security situation there is no alternative to a sustainable political solution through a comprehensive national dialogue in line with the mediation of the East African Community. We also call on the international community to pay heed to the economic and humanitarian consequences of the conflict in the country and to establish a constructive dialogue between Burundi and its partners. We stress the importance of the role of the Peacebuilding Commission, which has assisted in putting together the Government and its partners and in building trust.

Egypt presides over the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we want to promote the role of that committee, which seeks to ensure stability and security in the country. In that regard, we express our deep condolences to the families of the two experts who lost their lives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Fesko (Ukraine): I join other colleagues in thanking the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, Mr. Said Djinnit, for his briefing on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

Ukraine welcomes the efforts and commitments of the parties to the Framework with regard to its further implementation, which they demonstrated during the reporting period. In addition, we commend the efforts undertaken by regional organizations, in particular the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the African Union (AU).

Nevertheless, we are concerned that some of the priority provisions remain unimplemented. On the one hand, we have statements on the part of all parties to the PSC Framework regarding their readiness to

implement those provisons. On the other, we see a lack of meaningful action — and by that I mean collective actions by all actors. Hence, the absence of a political will to comply with the promises and obligations made is a root cause of the delayed implementation of the PSC Framework.

That factor creates distrust among all regional members and provokes tensions among them. As a result, at the beginning of the year, an incursion of former Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) elements into the Democratic Republic of the Congo led to an exchange of accusations between the two neighbouring countries regarding their alleged failure to uphold regional commitments in the PSC Framework. To prevent the repetition of that situation in the future, Ukraine urges all signatories of the Nairobi Declarations to accelerate their efforts to resolve the issue of the M-23 as soon as possible.

The importance of such actions is highlighted by the fact that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is currently preparing to conduct long-awaited presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections in 2017. The challenges posed by the non-implementation of all of the provisions of the PSC Framework should not undermine or impede that process. In that regard, we believe that all regional actors should make it a priority to eliminate the threat of the Allied Democratic Forces and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

There is also an urgent need to resolve the issue of the presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of combatants of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition. We commend the readiness of the President of Uganda, Mr. Yoweri Museveni, to host those combatants who wish to relocate to Uganda, and urge the Government of South Sudan to consider that option as a possible way out of that situation.

We are also counting on the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to address, in a proper way, the new threat that recently emerged in the Kasai province, namely, the activities of the Kamiuna Nsapu gang, which allegedly killed two members of the United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, we urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to spare no effort in investigating all human rights violations and abuses in that region, committed by both State and non-State actors, and to bring those responsible to account.

Two weeks ago (see S/PV.7910), the Security Council considered the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and adapted the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the current realities and challenges in the country.

In the context of the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we want to express our concern regarding the recent appointment of Mr. Bruno Tshibala as Prime Minister of the country. As was clearly stipulated in the political agreement of 31 December, the opposition was given the prerogative of picking a candidate for the prime ministerial post. Thus, that appointment may, in our view, further exacerbate the political tensions among all stakeholders. We urge all national stakeholders to comply with their obligations under the agreement.

Another challenge in the region is the human rights situation in Burundi and the influx of Burundians into neighbouring countries. We are deeply disappointed that serious human rights violations and abuses continue, including killings, gender-based violence, arbitrary arrests and detentions, particularly of children, torture and ill-treatment, the intimidation of civil-society organizations and journalists, as well as restrictions on fundamental freedoms in that country. In our view, the lack of serious efforts to investigate human rights abuses and overcome the climate of impunity in the country only encourages perpetrators to commit new crimes. Ukraine also calls on the Government of Burundi to follow the example of the Gambia and South Africa, which reversed their previous decision to withdraw from the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The refugee crisis is a one of the main indicators of the worsening political and security situation in Burundi and in neighbouring countries. That situation requires urgent action aimed at delivering adequate assistance and at providing shelter and other necessary support to the vulnerable, including basic social services, ensuring child protection, the tackling of sexual and gender-based violence and helping people with special needs.

It is quite upsetting that the situation in Burundi is worsening, while the implementation of key elements of Security Council resolution 2303 (2016) has stalled.

We believe that increasing the human rights monitoring capacity and establishing a police component, as envisaged by resolution 2303 (2016), including the AU deployment of human rights observers and military experts, is urgently needed in order to reinforce peace-restoration efforts in Burundi.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Said Djinnit, for having taken the time to meet with the Security Council this morning. I also thank him for his presentation of the Secretary General's report (S/2017/208).

Four years after the adoption of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, Uruguay wishes to recognize the efforts and commitments of the signatory parties and the guarantor organizations as they work to implement the provisions of the agreement. High-level meetings have taken place over recent months, including the seventh high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, held last November in Angola. They testify to the timeliness and relevance of the provisions of the Framework agreement as a political and diplomatic platform for addressing the challenges facing the Great Lakes region. I would also like to commend the Governments of the Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Uganda for offering to host the eighth and ninth high-level meetings, this year and the next, respectively, which will help to maintain political momentum on the issue.

However, despite some progress in implementing the agreement, it should be noted that we continue to see very complex political, security and humanitarian challenges to peace and sustainable security in the Great Lakes region. We share the Special Envoy's view that what has been achieved so far may be negatively affected by the continued presence of non-State armed groups, mainly in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are concerned about the appearance since August 2016 of a new militia, inspired by the Kamuina Nsapu chieftaincy and led by Jean-Pierre Mpandi, that is especially active in Kasai, Kasai-Central, Kasai-Oriental and Lomami. It is particularly violent and has been recruiting minors under 14 years old, some of whom have been given drugs. In theory, this group was also responsible for the murder of United Nations experts Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalan, to whom the Security Council paid tribute on 31 March (see S/PV.7910). However, the crackdown in response has been extremely tough and at times excessive and in situations such as have been described, the civilian population feels terrorized, seemingly defenceless and trapped between two equally hostile forces. The commitment and concerted action of all the countries that are signatories to the Framework agreement will be essential if the destabilizing actions of armed groups such as I just mentioned is to be effectively addressed.

The humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region is also very worrying, especially in South Sudan, where it is simply a disaster. But there are also other countries in the region, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and the Central African Republic, that are still facing serious humanitarian problems, with millions of people displaced and whose most basic humanitarian needs are not being addressed. I would like to commend the tireless efforts of the thousands of humanitarian workers who have put their lives in the service of peace and the effort to save the lives of millions of civilians.

On the political front, we have still not seen concrete results from the dialogue processes ongoing in various countries in the region. We should emphasize how vital it is to ensure in every case that the political dialogue is inclusive, transparent and peaceful but, most importantly, that it is genuine and conducted in good faith by all the interested parties. At the same time, it should also guarantee the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We must never stop emphasizing the fact that dialogue is the only possible way to resolve differences. Uruguay would also like to commend all the mediation and facilitation efforts being made by eminent people working on behalf of Africa's regional and subregional organizations. However, the Security Council must remain vigilant and condemn any violations of human rights that could further provoke the parties in conflict and work directly to prevent armed clashes — the effective prevention of conflict that we all want.

In conclusion, Uruguay urges the Governments of the region and the international community as a whole to come together to promote political and social stability of the Great Lakes region through the full implementation of the commitments undertaken by the signatories to the Framework agreement.

Mr. Temenov (Kazakhstan): We would like to thank Mr. Said Djinnit, the Special Envoy of the

Secretary-General, for his briefing today, as well as for his untiring commitment to seeing stability in the Great Lakes region.

Kazakhstan commends the ongoing efforts of the signatory countries to implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, which is vital to achieving stability in the Great Lakes. We welcome the signatories' growing ownership of the efforts to implement the Framework and realize the ongoing reforms. Any prolongation of the political impasse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi could turn the acute tensions into full-fledged conflict.

Maintaining the momentum and positive dynamics of the current political processes will be crucial to stabilizing the situation in the region. That depends on the political will of the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. We note the recent appointment of a new Prime Minister in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, it has led to a swift reaction from the opposition, and the consultations between President Kabila and the Rassemblement should therefore continue. Where Burundi is concerned, we believe it should continue its dialogue with the opposition through the good offices of the East African Community-led dialogue facilitator and with the broad engagement of the European Union and the United Nations.

The growing violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo caused by the incursions into the country of former elements of the Mouvement du 23 mars and by clashes in the Kasai and Tanganyika regions, as well as the presence of illegal armed groups. These remain the chief threats to the security not only of the country but of the entire region. We hope that the recent priorities introduced into the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the reforms of the Mission itself, will help to improve the security situation on the ground, especially in the light of the country's upcoming elections.

The humanitarian situation on the ground is dire and closely tied to the area's political and security instability and prevailing lack of development. We commend the efforts of the Governments and their peoples in the region in hosting refugees and internally displaced persons, and encourage the international community and regional and subregional organizations to increase their support to those host countries.

Kazakhstan supports the countries of the region in organizing the forthcoming African Great Lakes Conference in Uganda. It is clear that a shared, comprehensive approach involving political dialogue and close cooperation among all the States of the region is the only way to achieve peace and security in the Great Lakes.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/208) and his Special Envoy, Mr. Said Djinnit, for his briefing today and his efforts to see the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region implemented. I would also like to commend him for exercising his good offices and advocating with regional partners, as well as his efforts to include meaningful participation by women peacemakers in the implementation of the Framework.

The situation in the Great Lakes region remains volatile and unstable. Many of the challenges are transnational, transcending national borders. Violations of international humanitarian law and abuses of human rights, carried out with impunity, contribute to the cycles of conflict. The scale of displacement, with 9.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons, is a clear indication of the political and security challenges that still plague the region. It is clear that a regional approach is needed if the interconnected nature of the crisis is to be addressed. The Great Lakes region has witnessed some success in its integration in recent years, especially in terms of trade and economic activity. We also commend the generosity and solidarity of the people and countries of the region in hosting their displaced neighbours, often for very long periods. However, more must be done to overcome the obstacles to peace and stability facing the region and to come to terms with the armed groups in the area, including through improved implementation of the Framework.

We are deeply concerned by the continued and increased levels of violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as by the deteriorating humanitarian situation there. There is a risk that political uncertainty and the lack of progress in the implementation of the comprehensive political agreement of 31 December 2016 will exacerbate instability. That includes the situation in the east and the activity by armed groups; the resurgence of the Mouvement du 23 mars M23 is one

such example. The Council has repeatedly and clearly signalled to the Congolese parties how important it is that they implement their agreement. That includes the need for a transitional Government supported by all the parties in order to prepare for elections. The legitimacy of the Government is linked to respect for the agreement. The active participation of women, including in the elections, also adds both legitimacy and sustainability to the political process.

Regional actors have an essential role to play in moving the political process forward. We welcome the efforts of the Southern African Development Community to support progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A visit by representatives of the Southern African Development Community's Organ on Politics, Defence and Security has the potential to provide momentum for the implementation of the New Year's Eve agreement and that momentum is urgently needed. The Regional Oversight Mechanism meeting in Luanda in 2016 and the African Union Peace and Security Council statement in support of the reactivation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and the Nairobi Declarations-related mechanism to deal with the security challenges in the region are examples of positive regional efforts. Influential regional actors should coordinate so as to ensure coherent messages. It is important that the Security Council provide backing for and align itself with such efforts. We should support Mr. Djinnit's efforts in the same way.

Constructive regional engagement in Burundi by the East African Community (EAC) deserves full support, in particular the inter-Burundian dialogue under the Mediator, President Museveni, and the Facilitator, Mr. Mkapa. An EAC summit, including on the situation in Burundi, at the earliest possible time, is important, as it would add further momentum to the quest for stability and progress in Burundi. Meanwhile, the political and human rights situation continues to cause concern. It is therefore important for agreements to be reached to allow for the full functioning of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and African Union military and human rights observers.

Despite some progress, the challenges in the Great Lakes region remain significant. The international community remains committed. However, ultimately it will up to the countries of the region to find peaceful solutions. We must fully support the constructive actions of regional actors who seek to move the region beyond insecurity, uncertainty and political division.

Mr. Fernández Revollo (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Plurinational State of Bolivia welcomes the briefing by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr Said Djinnit, and thanks him for the arduous efforts that he and his team have made to meet the challenges of maintaining peace and security in the region.

In recent years, owing to multidimensional factors, namely, wars of decolonialization, the arbitrary or artificial nature of borders established in colonies, the serious conflicts spawned by the Cold War, which included wars of secession and conflicting state interests and civil wars caused by economic factors and fuelled by external actors, an environment replete with conflicts and wars has emerged in the brotherly continent of Africa. Such multidimensional factors were mentioned by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his report to the Security Council (S/1998/318), published in April 1998, on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. The report cited natural resources as the main cause of conflict. They have been and will continue to be key determinants in the spread of socioeconomic conflicts through the financing of armed groups and the control of countries and their populations.

The Great Lakes region, which is one of the world's richest in natural resources, is an example of an environment created by large multinationals and international consortiums that undermine State capacity by encouraging the purchase of diamonds, copper, cobalt, coltan and other resources that are mined illegally by armed groups, which fuels wars by providing such groups with the means to perpetuate conflict. In that regard, Bolivia voices its concern about the illegal activities of armed groups in the region, such as the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the Allied Democratic Forces, the Lord's Resistance Army and the reappearance of former members of the Mouvement du 23 mars, as well as inter-ethnic conflicts in various areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which all undermine efforts to foster stability and security.

At the same time, insecurity and violence have continued to heighten tensions in the region, resulting in many deaths. During the reporting period of the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2017/208),

published in March, Burundi's Environment Minister was murdered at the beginning of 2017, and in Uganda, on the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a clash occurred between security forces and local militia groups, which left at least 87 people dead.

We are also concerned about the humanitarian situation in the region, which makes the conflicts increasingly complex. There are more than 6 million internally displaced persons and 3.5 million refugees — considered to be the most vulnerable population groups. Despite the major conflict, Bolivia is optimistic about the outcome of efforts by regional and international associations, whose goal is to provide ongoing and coordinated support for the implementation of agreements that have been brokered primarily in order to build on the Nairobi Declarations, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, which are all connected to the United Nations Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework 2016-2017. The priority is to encourage dialogue, the neutralization of armed groups, the promotion of the rights of women and young people, and civil-society participation. We highlight the progress made in preparing for elections in the brotherly countries of Angola, Kenya, Rwanda and, in particular, the promise by the Democratic Republic of the Congo that presidential elections will be held at the end of 2017 in an inclusive political process.

In conclusion, with regard to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the countries of the Great Lakes region, we encourage all parties and the international community, as a whole, to continue to assist with technical support and economic and humanitarian cooperation by pooling their efforts to achieve stability and lasting peace through a process of disarmament, dialogue, reconciliation and reintegration.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I thank you, Madam President, for convening today's important meeting and for maintaining the Security Council's focus on conflict prevention in Africa. I join others in thanking Special Envoy Said Djinnit for his briefing, but also for the critical role that he has played in keeping preventive diplomacy active and in including women in peace processes, as already mentioned by the representative of Sweden and others.

As Mr. Djinnit and others have made clear today, the Great Lakes region continues to face many challenges. In response, it is clear that a structured approach to regional stability is needed. We support work to reform and reinvigorate the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. It needs needs active engagement from its members and guarantors to have high impact, and that impact, as we have heard, is vital.

Today I personally want to focus on two countries in the region, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi.

As we heard last month, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains deeply troubling. I pay tribute to the Conférence nationale épiscopale du Congo for its mediation efforts, but it is up to the Government and the opposition to deliver the 31 December agreement in letter and in spirit, with purposeful speed. What we have actually seen is stalling and obfuscation, particularly by the Government. This is not only hindering implementation of the agreement, but also is distracting attention from the real prize that is at stake: peaceful and credible elections to take place this year, enabling the first democratic transition of power in the country's history.

Sadly, the obstacles to this goal go beyond inertia. The appointment of a new Prime Minister by President Kabila last week was an active step, and I agree with France that it is a worrying one. It went against both the spirit and the letter of the agreement. This appointment will not help to restore the broad national consensus that lies at the heart of the agreement. Until that consensus is built, the uncertainty of the politics of the Democratic Republic of the Congo risks being mirrored in the security situation, which continues to deteriorate.

We are particularly concerned about the increase in violence and reports of atrocities in the Kasai region. This underlines the importance of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Joint Human Rights Office investigating violations and abuses of human rights and international law. Those who commit human rights violations must be held to account.

We are also concerned about the ongoing threat from armed groups, including the resurgence of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We reiterate the need for dialogue, not just a military effort, in order to tackle armed groups. The resumption of talks between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the M23 is vital, as is the implementation

of the Nairobi declarations and the repatriation of M23 and Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda rebels. We support the Special Envoy and his efforts to make progress on these issues.

The presence of Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition elements in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is destabilizing. We welcome the efforts by Special Representative Sidikou as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to find a solution and their engagement with regional partners. We need to find a regional solution urgently to avoid exacerbating tensions in fragile local communities. We ask that the Secretariat keep the Council updated.

Turning to the concerning situation in Burundi, the regime claims that normality is returning to the country. It is not. A climate of fear persists as disappearances, arbitrary arrests and killings continue almost daily. The Government still shows no sign of acting in the interests of its people and seems to be concerned only with clinging onto power. Moves by President Nkurunziza to enable him to remain in power for a fourth term, and possibly beyond, risk bringing the country to the brink once again.

The Government's refusal to engage with the international community is especially worrying, and some of the language and activity of the Imbonerakure, as others have said earlier in this meeting, is truly horrific. Here, in this open meeting, I call on the Government of Burundi to participate fully in the talks being led by former President Mkapa. These talks, which must be open and sincere, as France has said, remain the best hope of resolving the crisis peacefully. We urge the Government to enable implementation of resolution 2303 (2016) and to allow the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to conduct its work without hindrance and cooperate fully with the commission of inquiry which was mandated by the Human Rights Council. I agree with Egypt and Sweden that the Peacebuilding Commission has an important role to play in all of this.

We know how difficult it is to bring peace and stability to a country or region after conflict, but we also know that it can be done and that there is nothing inevitable about the future. The Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi can step back from their current courses; they can take decisions in the interests of their people, and they can avoid bloodshed and instability in this very fragile region.

It is the duty of all countries in the Council to support that course and to do all we can to implement our own resolutions. Given the significance that Ethiopia has already talked about in terms of the wider strategic posture in this region, it is really important that we all do our best right now.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the United States.

I thank Special Envoy Djinnit for his work to advance the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

Two weeks ago, we renewed the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). That vote was an important step in reinvigorating efforts to set the Democratic Republic of the Congo on a path towards a democratic transition of power. That is the only way to ensure the long-term stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Certainly the challenges in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are immense, and we are deeply disturbed by the violence and reports of mass graves in the Kasais.

We recognize the importance of investigating these atrocities and urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to work with and not act as an impediment to MONUSCO and other relevant parts of the United Nations to swiftly conduct these investigations. We are also deeply disappointed by the lack of progress in the implementation of the 31 December political agreement between the Government and the opposition. We continue to support this agreement, which represents the best path forward for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including for ensuring upcoming elections and a peaceful transition of power. The United States continues to urge both the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the opposition to resolve outstanding issues, make concessions and work constructively in the implementation of the agreement.

It remains clear that our collective efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be matched with strong simultaneous efforts to address all the regional sources of instability. Now more than ever we need the focus of Special Envoy Djinnit to be on addressing problems related to the armed groups

operating in the region and the legacies of past conflicts. In this regard, we appreciate the efforts made over the past six months to reform the Government structures of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and to reinvigorate its implementation. We are also pleased that there have been some improvements in relations among the Great Lakes countries, most notably between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

However, we share the concern of the Secretary-General, as mentioned in his recent report (S/2017/208), that the continued presence of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the wider region pose acute challenges. In the last six months, we have seen Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and South Sudanese fighters cross into the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These militants are in addition to Allied Democratic Forces, Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda and Lord's Resistance Army fighters, and numerous local militias that are already operating in the region. Their arrival in the Democratic Republic of the Congo comes at a time of increasing inter-ethnic violence.

We echo the Secretary-General's call for the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the leadership of the former M23 to resume their implementation of the Nairobi declaration and ask Special Envoy Djinnit to redouble his efforts in support of these and other efforts aimed at reducing the threat of armed groups.

Now is the time to advance the agreements and processes that chart a path towards peace.

We must see honest, good-faith efforts by all countries in the region to repatriate combatants and stop support for armed groups. The problems are there, and they are at risk of growing.

In our focus on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we must not lose sight of continuing challenges in Burundi. We are grateful to President Mkapa for his facilitation of the inter-Burundian dialogue, but stronger and more sustained leadership from the region will be necessary to generate the pressure needed on both sides to make the dialogue a success and ensure that the crisis in Burundi does not become an increasing source of instability for the region. The current situation in Burundi is not sustainable or acceptable.

We know that Special Envoy Djinnit has a very challenging job. We will continue to work with him and our allies to advanced stability in the Great Lakes region, but those efforts cannot advance without strong and consistent engagement from the region. I urge him to continue engaging all of the stakeholders in the region to reinforce the importance of following through on the commitments that they have made. We are here to make things work, and, if they do not work, we need to change them.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Gata Mavita wa Lufuta (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me, Madam President, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April, and to say how honoured we are to see the United States of America, a friendly country, preside over today's meeting. I would also like to thank you for having taken the initiative of convening this meeting on the Great Lakes region and the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. I would also like thank all members of the Security Council for the exemplary readiness and determination that they have always shown on every occasion when they have been called upon to consider the situation in my country.

We appreciate the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/208) on the implementation of the agreement on the Framework that Mr. Said Djinnit, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, whose presence I welcome, just presented to us. Although the report does not, in general, make any major observations, for our part we would like, nevertheless, to briefly make several comments that my delegation deems important.

With regard to the security situation, the Secretary-General's report highlights the efforts of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, working in cooperation with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), to neutralize foreign and domestic armed groups. My delegation would like to reassure the Council that those efforts will continue until the those groups are totally eradicated.

The report also acknowledges the relevance of the Congolese Government's request to MONUSCO to rapidly evacuate elements of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition who remain on Congolese territory, while at the same time underlining the situation concerning members of the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda who are cantoned in three sites and continue to wait to be repatriated to their countries of origin or sent to a third host country. It is important that the Council devote attention to those two situations, which continue to be of concern for my country, instead of deferring them to other countries in the region.

Within the framework of the commitments obligating the countries of the region not to harbour or, under any circumstances, provide protection to persons accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity, acts of genocide and crimes of aggression, or to persons under a United Nations sanctions regime, and to facilitate the administration of justice through judicial cooperation in the region, my country has apprehended various high-level leaders of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) sought by international justice, who have been extradited to Rwanda through MONUSCO. Among the names of those high-level persons to be held accountable, one can cite those of General Léopold Mujyambere, Colonel Félicien Nsanzubukire, Colonel Mucebo Habyarimana, Colonel Anastase Munyaneza, Major Vainqueur Nzabimana, Captain Théophile Twagiramungu, Captain Ladislas Ntanganzwa and Mr. Martin Gatabazi .

On the other hand, several international arrest warrants submitted to other countries in the region by the Democratic Republic of the Congo within the framework of regional judicial cooperation in pursuit of Congolese nationals who are the alleged perpetrators of crimes against humanity and war crimes remain outstanding. Yet those individuals continue not only to move about freely within neighbouring countries, but are also carrying out destabilizing activities directed against my country. Iin that context, especially concerning members of the former Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23), the Democratic Republic of the Congo reaffirms its determination to fulfil its commitments under the Framework agreement signed at Addis Ababa and calls on the other parties to the agreement, in particular Uganda and Rwanda, to do the same.

During previous Security Council meetings, my delegation has spoken at length on the subject of the M-23. I believe that it is useful to resume that discussion by saying that the efforts taken by my Government, which have gone so far as to propose to members of M-23 their unconditional repatriation, have not achieved their goal, due to the refusal of the leadership of that movement, which took the former rebels hostage, and to a lack of genuine cooperation with the neighbouring countries that are lodging them. That is why my country has always asked for the Council's involvement, so as to make such cooperation possible with a view to definitively resolving that situation.

Concerning the political situation, after the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo reported on its mission to the President of the Republic, as everyone knows, he endeavoured to undertake consultations with the political opposition and the presidential majority. At the conclusion of those consultations, based on the proposals made to him by the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo acquises au changement, he appointed on 7 April — in keeping the promise made in his speech given before Congress — Mr. Bruno Tshibala to the post of Prime Minister. Mr. Tshibala is a member of the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social — the party of the late Étienne Tshisekedi — and of the Rassemblement. The latter is already conducting consultations, so as to put together a Government of national unity in the coming days. My delegation believes that the Council must refrain from becoming involved in the conflict within the Rassemblement, the ins and outs of which the Council is not familiar with. In favouring one faction of the Rassemblement, as some members have just done, they risk reigniting the conflict.

Moreover, my delegation would like to draw the attention of the Council to the fact that the political agreement of 31 December 2016 does not replace the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Defended yesterday in the Chamber by a large number of Council members, the political agreement of 31 December 2016 only regulates a temporary situation linked to the elections, while legitimacy and the source of power rest in the Constitution.

With regard to the Conseil national de suivi de l'accord, the President of the Republic has asked the relevant stakeholders to make a concerted effort to appoint staff quickly by consensus.

Before concluding, we believe that it is important to point out that the political opposition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is governed by article 8 of the Constitution, and that its status is determined by statute. Consequently, paragraph 65 of the report, which designates as the head of the Congolese opposition an individual who has not been designated as such by the opposition parties or recognized by the law has no place in the report.

In conclusion, I should like to reaffirm that the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo place much hope in the Addis Ababa agreement on the Framework — a hope to build a lasting peace, promote harmonious coexistence with the countries of the region and place the foundations of stability for all our States without which it is difficult to pave the way forward for regional and mutually advantageous cooperation. That is why my country will always remain attached to the agreement and will pursue its implementation so that it can truly achieve the objectives for which it was conceived.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.